

**Grand Forks
Air Force Base
in
Action!**

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THE **WARRIOR**

Stories and photos by the 319th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs Office, Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D.



Base cops get new mission

By Airman 1st Class Ashley Coomes
Public Affairs

Two specialized base security forces teams deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan Dec. 3 for a special mission after training at Fort Lewis, Wash. and at Silver Flag Airbase Defense School at Creech Air Force Guard Base, Nev.

The teams took over responsibility for detainee operations at several prisons from the Army.

The teams received specialized training including convoy operations, weapons qualification and airbase ground defense.

"It's a unique mission for Air Force security forces. We

have never done this before. We went through four weeks of detainee operations training with the Army to learn it and everyone is excited about it," said Capt. Paul Zwilling, one of the 319th Security Forces Squadron deployers.

"This is a new mission set for our Air Force and you're leading the way. You are directly involved in ensuring the success of the joint war-fighting commander. The importance of what you're doing should not be lost on anyone ... the role you are playing is significant. You're ready and you're going to do well," said Col. Bill Bender, 319th Air Refueling Wing Commander, who addressed the troops prior to their departure.



Photos by Airman 1st Class Ashley Coomes
(Above) Col. Bill Bender, 319th Air Refueling Wing commander, bids farewell to 44 security forces Airmen who deployed Dec. 3.

(Left) Before the warriors deploy, Col. Bender makes some motivational remarks.

Grand Forks Airmen go to war

... right here on base

By Capt. Michael Meridith
Public Affairs

For several days this past December, hundreds of Warriors of the North went to war, operating from a "deployed" location right here on base.

The "war," an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise, tested the expeditionary readiness of Warriors of the North and capped two weeks of individual and aircraft exercises affecting nearly everyone in the wing.

The ATSO scenario put Airmen to the test, forcing them to react to everything from mock chemical, ground and indirect fire attacks to medical emergencies, all while carrying out the 139th Air Expeditionary Wing's (as the "deployed" unit was called) critical air refueling mission.

"It was amazing - all the things they threw at us," said Airman Doris Ochoa-Parra, 319th Aircraft

Maintenance Squadron. "We had mortar attacks, chemical attacks and all kinds of scenarios, but our team was able to come together and still carry out the mission."

According to wing leaders, although the primary goal of the exercise was to hone skills for next summer's Operational Readiness Inspection, the secondary intent was to practice skills important to all Airmen in today's expeditionary Air Force.

"It's a requirement that we maintain our ability to do the mission we've been given under any conditions. For example, a chemical environment is one that would bring us to a halt if we didn't practice the ability to protect ourselves and continue to operate," said Col. Bill Bender, 319th Air Refueling Wing Commander.

For exercise planners, realism was a primary concern. Since a large number of Airmen had previous deployment experience, scenarios had to capture like-

ly events and offer opportunities to practice critical, life-saving skills necessary in real-world deployed locations.

"We talked to other bases that had been through previous ORIs to ensure our scenarios matched theirs, but more importantly we also baselined the real-world experiences of many different people," said Maj. Colin Sindel, the wing inspector general's chief of exercises.

According to exercise planners, the last two weeks were just the start for the Warriors of the North. Several other exercises - both here and at other bases - are planned to take place on a regular basis before the upcoming ORI. The objective: to ensure Airmen are prepared for whatever challenges, both real-world and simulated, are thrown their way.

"It was pretty realistic," said Tech. Sgt. Chris Hargett, boom operator with the 912th Air Refueling Squadron. "We got a lot of experience on how all the parts of the mission come together under combat conditions."

"We've run the complete gamut of our additional missions," said Colonel Bender. "Day to day we refuel, but there are additional missions we have responsibility for, including supporting U.S. Strategic Command, operating in a chemical environment and relocating our entire force and operating out of an austere location. We've done all three of those in the last few weeks and improved our knowledge of how to do it and built the confidence that we could do it in real life."



Combat medics take care of a simulated nerve agent victim during the Base X exercise. The exercise put nearly 400 Warriors of the North to the test in a variety of realistic deployed situations.



1st Lt. Patrick Kelly, 319th Communications Squadron, tests a phone line during the exercise.

Photos by Airman 1st Class Chad Kellum

'Class act' draws thousands



Members of Tops in Blue include Airmen from across the Force who submit to a grueling and competitive audition process.



Thousands of base and community members attended the Dec. 11 Tops in Blue concert at the Alerus Center, which featured music from a variety of eras.

340th EARS takes tanker frenzy in stride

Story, photos by Capt. Eric Badger
379th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

When it comes to the 340th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron at this forward deployed location, passing gas isn't considered rude, in fact it's encouraged.

After a short notice ramp closure at another deployed location, six KC-35 Stratotankers and three KC-10 Extender air refueling aircraft, also known as tankers, made this location their overnight home Nov. 14. According to Grand Forks Air Force Base's Maj. Majewski, then deployed as the 340 EARS Operations Officer, the squadron was worth its weight in fuel Nov. 15.

"About 74 percent of all gas in the AOR took off from this base," he said. "We conducted 70 percent more flights that day from here than on a normal day for us. It was truly amazing."

The outstanding accomplishments

of the refueling squadron during this hectic time came as no surprise to one person in particular.

"The troops fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom count on our close air support, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions," said Brig. Gen. (sel) Ted Kresge, 379 AEW Commander. "That means air refueling, and lots of it. Our tanker crews and maintainers are spending half their lives in this AOR because they're critical to winning this war. They are my heroes."

The 340 EARS had the responsibility of "catching" each and every crew throughout the night. The operations staff also had the task of building all additional nine flying packages for the next day's sorties. Successfully catching the extra aircraft and preparing them for a return flight in such a short amount of time was a complete team effort, according to Major Majewski.

"From the maintainers on the flight-

line to flight crews getting a good night's rest thanks to the 379th Expeditionary Mission Support Group, everyone came together and took care of business," he said.

Receiving the tankers on Nov. 14 and ensuring a successful departure on Nov. 15 was a tremendous task, but nothing the maintainers couldn't handle said Grand Forks' Capt. Jason Schafer, the deployed 340th Aircraft Maintenance Unit Officer-in-Charge.

"We only had about two to three hours to prepare for the aircraft to arrive, and our normal operations weren't stopping," he said. "But our maintainers are top-notch professionals and the entire event went off better than I ever could have expected."

The initial concern was whether or not the base had enough ramp space to accommodate the extra aircraft, however the swift thinking and vast experience of the 340 AMU production supervisors came to the rescue.



On Nov. 15, the 340th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron completed 70 percent more flights than their normal operations require.

"Coordination made it all happen" said Captain Schafer. "We maintained constant contact with the 340 EARS staff and various base agencies here such as airfield management to pull this off. Our production supervisors are consummate veterans. They made it look easy."



Grand Forks church members donated toys for base children Dec. 4.

Community members reach out to base families

By Capt. Michael Meridith
Public Affairs

Members of a Grand Forks church recently played "Santa" for base children with a special presentation to the wing Dec. 4.

Col. Lee DeRemer, 319th Operations Group commander, gratefully accepted several bags of toys donated by members of Grand Forks' First Presbyterian Church dur-

ing the presentation.

The donation was the brain child of Roger Foster, motorcycle enthusiast and member of First Presbyterian. Foster, who led a group of 50 bikers past the base on Aug. 7 to raise awareness of the toy drive and demonstrate support to the base, said, "It's just a way we can show our appreciation to those who give so unselfishly to our country."

According to family support cen-

ter director Mark Patton, who helped coordinate the presentation, the toys will be distributed to families on base in the coming days through wing first sergeants.

"At this time of the year, above all, we are reminded of the importance of kindness to others. This wonderful gesture shows all of the Warriors of the North how much support they have in this great community and it means a lot," said Colonel DeRemer.

